

When Faith Was Better than Reason By Franklin Lang



DECLARE, Philip," continued my sister indignantly. "you are as bad as all the rest— bent on persecuting Mr. Eastcott; and yet you pretend to be his friend. I am ashamed of you."

"My dear Laura," I said, "you are a woman and will not listen to reason." "Reason!" she cried disdainfully. "I am proud of being a woman. It saves me from such reason as yours. A woman is inspired by faith; a man by what he calls 'reason'; that is why it's better to be a woman."

I groaned in spirit. I might be able to break a horse, or train a dog, but to overcome the blind faith of a woman in the man she loved, that I found was a task beyond my power to perform.

"I see through it all, Philip," she continued. "This is another mean trick to ruin Mr. Eastcott. You know the rector is jealous of his popularity, and father and the other churchwardens are prepared to commit any act of injustice to please the rector. It is because he places his sacred duties before the amenities of social life, because he is a true and earnest Christian, that the rector wishes to get rid of him; and not daring to do it in a straightforward manner, is pretending to give evidence to all the miserable gossip that circulates in this despicable little town. It makes my blood boil to think of such meanness."

"There is truth in some of your assertions," I said, "and you know that until this last affair I always stood up for Eastcott, and perhaps I should do so now if it wasn't for your connection with him. You are not actually engaged—"

"I wish we were, so that I could stand by Wilfred's side and show the town the contempt I feel for its wicked rumors. I suppose you possess sufficient 'reason' to know why Mr. Eastcott has not actually proposed to me?"

"I conclude he considers his position and prospects too uncertain to undertake such an obligation."

"Of course, and he is too much a man to ask or accept 'her' liberality."

"But, Laura," I urged, "although we both honor Eastcott for his many admirable qualities, it is childish to shut us to this wretched scandal. You must remember I am not forming an opinion from idle gossip; I have the witness of my own ears and eyes."

"Your senses have deceived you, Philip," she said, with a woman's audacity. "And let me tell you once and for all that I will not believe anything against Wilfred, and that if he is disgraced I will gladly share in his disgrace."

We Perivales have always been considered an obstinate lot, but I could never have supposed a Miss Perivale to be guilty of such extraordinary perversity, or of an infatuation that would deprive her of her senses.

The Rev. Wilfred Eastcott, the curate of our parish church, though possessing nothing much in the way of family, was a well-known figure in the village, a clever, winning, broad-minded, and eloquent young fellow. In person he was tall and handsome, with a presence that commanded respect; and it was not altogether surprising that the rector, Mr. Fox, should feel insignificant in his curate's society.

It was quite true that a dead set had been made against Eastcott, and I had endeavored to influence my father in his favor, but the close and intimate friendship that existed between him and the rector rendered my efforts of little use. Another thing that had set my father and the rector against Eastcott was his warm friendship for Laura, for I knew well that the heads of the two families were desirous of a union between her and young Wyndham Fox, the rector's son. Well, whatever may have been my opinion of Eastcott, the least I could say of him now was



that he had made a fool of himself. Fancy a man already surrounded with enemies, placing in their hands such miserable folly! It was altogether beyond my comprehension. I knew what men were, but the curate's conduct was simply inexplicable.

At our local theater that week a well-known actress, Miss Maud Valaire, was appearing; and before she had been in the place three days I began to hear rumors that she and Eastcott were meeting clandestinely. There may not have been much harm in that, but in such a town as ours it was certainly most indiscreet. I knew the manager of the theater, and I learned from him that Miss Valaire was a woman of superior character, education, and refinement. She had been on the stage for fifteen years, and her name had never been linked with scandal. This did not by any means reassure me. I knew perfectly well that Eastcott would never have been attracted by a vulgar comedienne, and it was possible that he had been as much attracted by this woman's superior culture as by her undoubted physical charms. I was out Thursday night with my gun, hoping to get a shot at ducks, and was lying hidden in a kind of sand cave, when I heard voices and saw two figures approaching. The moon was up and I immediately recognized Eastcott and Maud Valaire. I could see from their attitude that love-making was going on, and as they passed I heard the woman say:

"My dearest Wilfred, but a few more days and this hateful and unnatural separation will be at an end. Our love will not be a pain then, but a real delight. Think of having my own dear one, but I kept my eyes upon them, and before they had gone far they stopped to bid one another farewell, and then I saw them kiss. There was no doubting the fact; as plainly as I ever saw anything I saw them kiss one another. And this is what I told Laura and still her faith in this faithless curate remained unbroken!

I did not meet Eastcott the next day, but I heard the town was riling with his name. Some one else must have been hiding and observed the amorous couple, for the story was in everybody's mouth. It was all over with Eastcott now, and poor Laura would have to bear her disgrace as best she could. I called at Eastcott's room that evening, but was told that he was out. "More of the actress," I thought, and walked mechanically to the spot where I had seen them. It was foolish to expect to meet them there at so early an hour, for Miss Valaire would be engaged at the theater. I had just arrived at my cave, when I saw two figures approaching. Getting on my side, and his arm looked suspiciously like encircling her waist. I do not know which of them most aroused my indignation—my sister for her mad infatuation or Eastcott for his miserable duplicity. Well, the storm that was brewing would soon break, the curate would be sent packing, and then perhaps Laura would come to her senses. But I was really sorry that my sister should be mixed up in so unpleasant an affair. I had warned her and could do no more.

I don't know whether I ought to have left my hiding place and accosted the lovers and taken Laura home. Perhaps I ought to have done so.

happened I ought to have thrashed Eastcott. But I did not much relish being taken for a spy, so I remained in my cave. I came across Laura later in the evening. "Philip," she said, "congratulate me; Wilfred and I are engaged."

"Congratulations, Laura, how can I do that, when Eastcott will be disgraced in a few days? Did you not ask him about the actress?"

"I did not so demean myself!"

"Has he spoken to father?"

"Not yet."

"That is wise."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that father will never agree to your engagement. Laura, take my advice and keep the fact quiet for a few days."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. Do you think I shall ever be ashamed of being engaged to Mr. Eastcott?"

"I really think you are the most obstinate and infatuated woman in the world. You compel me to say that you deserve the disgrace Eastcott will bring upon you."

The storm clouds gathered heavily, and the rector and wardens held a conference on the Saturday night, but nothing was absolutely settled. The crisis was brought to a head by Miss Valaire's appearance at evening service the next day. The choir were already in the stalls and Eastcott at the reading desk when the tall and imposing figure of the actress was seen walking up the aisle. The curate recognized her, and his act of recognition was remarked in several quarters. Laura noticed it, and I fancied turned a little pale, but recovered herself on finding I was observing her. At the conclusion of the service Miss Valaire seemed in no hurry to leave the church. Surely she had not the audacity to await Eastcott and leave the sacred edifice in his company.

Mr. Webster, one of the wardens, came and summoned my father to the vestry. "Hallo!" I thought, "the climax has been reached. The Rev. Wilfred Eastcott will have occasion to remember this evening."

Laura guessed what was about to happen, and sat with her lips firmly compressed. It was a strange situation. She, her rival, and I were alone in the church.

"Philip," she said presently, "go and tell Wilfred that I am in the church waiting for him."

I entered the vestry and found Eastcott there talking unconcernedly with some of the choir men. My father came out of the inner vestry and summoned me in. We stood, the rector, and his son Wyndham were there.

"Philip," said the rector in his pompous tones, "the churchwardens and I are determined to put a stop to this scandal. Tonight during divine service this miserable infatuation has been going on before my eyes and the eyes of the people. It is intolerable. I have decided to dismiss Eastcott, but before doing so I am anxious to collect all the evidence I can against him, and I understand you can help me."

Although I thought the curate deserved his dismissal I had no desire to leave the rector to suffer. "I do not know that I can materially assist you," I said, "the whole town appears to know as much as I do."

"You saw Eastcott and Maud Valaire together Thursday night," said Wyndham Fox.

"How do you know?" I asked. "He was a sneaking kind of fellow and I thoroughly disliked him."

"I saw you there with your gun. They passed close to you, and you must have seen them."

"Well, sir," turning to the rector, "if your son saw them that is sufficient."

He did not appear to be so certain of this, but let the matter drop.

"We will have Eastcott in and question him," he said. Eastcott entered, and I could not help admiring the man's expression of unconcern. If he had possessed even the faintest defense his manner would have saved him. Nothing could have been more ingenuous.

Mr. Eastcott, said the rector in the most solemn of his tones, "I am deeply pained that your conduct should have brought you under the censure of myself and the wardens, but you have only yourself to blame. You have filled the town with scandal, and brought discredit on your office and the church generally. I am astonished that you should have flung all discretion to the winds, and have acted like a man who had no character to sustain. I know not what action the bishop may take in regard to your conduct, but we are decided that you can remain curate of this church no longer."

While the rector was speaking Eastcott had been gazing at him in astonishment; when he delivered his sentence, the curate flushed angrily.

"Mr. Fox," he said, "I have heard my sentence, but I am still ignorant of the charge upon which I am arraigned. His air of injured innocence was one of the finest bits of acting I had ever witnessed—it was worthy of Maud Valaire herself."

"Your hypocrisy, Mr. Eastcott, only adds to your offense," said the rector. "Your conduct is the common talk of the town."

"I do not listen to the common talk of the town, sir," said Eastcott, "and if I did I should not consider it sufficient strong evidence to deprive a curate of his living and his character."

"We do not rely on mere gossip. You were seen under compromising circumstances with a lady on the sand dunes. Can you deny that?"

Eastcott smiled. "No, I cannot deny that I walked on the sand dunes with Miss Perivale, but then Miss Perivale and I are engaged."

"Engaged!" ejaculated my father and the rector in the same breath.

"That is the case," said Eastcott.

"Laura had not my permission. Her action has been precipitate, the engagement shall be broken off at once. I consider you have acted in a most unbecomingly manner. My daughter shall tell you this evening that she has parted with you forever."

"I do not think she will do that," said Eastcott, confidently.

The vestry door, which had stood ajar, now opened, and Laura entered. Her face was flushed and her eyes shone luminously.

"She will never say that, Wilfred," she remarked.

"her best friends have endeavored to break her faith, but without result. Her faith in you abides with her forever."

This melodramatic incident produced quite a sensation in the vestry, and made my father and the rector look rather foolish.

"What about Maud Valaire?" said young Fox bluntly to the curate. "You were walking with her on the sand dunes on Thursday, and I saw you kiss her."

At the last words Laura looked anxiously at her lover.

"Is that true or false?" asked the rector.

"Laura," said my father, "leave that man's side."

"I shall not, father," she said, "I do not believe these wicked stories."

"You still have faith in me, Laura?" asked Eastcott.

"Yes, Wilfred."

"I thank God for that."

"Answer my question," said the rector. "Did you or did you not kiss Miss Valaire Thursday night?"

"I asked, casually."

"The question is rather a perplexing one," said Eastcott, with that calm smile of his.

"A perplexing one," remarked my father, sarcastically.

"Yes, Mr. Perivale, it is; but I think I must answer in the negative."

"What?" thundered the rector; "you deny that you kissed her. You tell me this deliberate lie! O, this is terrible!"

"I saw you," said Wyndham, vindictively; "and so did Philip Perivale."

"Were you on the sand dunes, Philip, Thursday night?" he asked, casually.

"I was fishing," I answered. "It was quite an accident that I saw you."

"Stop this prevarication," said the rector, "your position is most serious."

"Gentlemen," said Eastcott, "you have been deceived."

"She was in church this evening," said Wyndham; "I believe she is waiting there now."

"Wyndham," said the rector, "ask her to step in here."

The affair was becoming exciting. How could Eastcott dare to face the actress? She entered, and so handsome and composed was her appearance that even the rector lost his assertiveness. She surveyed us all with a look of inquiry, and bowed gracefully to the rector.

"Did you wish to speak to me, sir?" she asked, in her full, clear voice.

"Yes, madam," said Mr. Fox, "a most unpleasant duty has devolved upon me. My curate and you were engaged, and some scandal in the town, and now Mr. Eastcott is foolish enough to protect himself with denials of absolute fact."

"What is the nature of the offense?" asked the actress.

"That you and he have met clandestinely late at night; that he kissed you."

Miss Valaire broke into a merry laugh. "O, is that all? You don't blame the poor boy for that?" Was the actress bent on ruining him?

"He is a clergyman," said the rector, severely. "His

conduct has brought discredit on the church."

"He has disgraced my daughter," said Mr. Perivale, "for after intruding with you he had the impudence to propose to her."

"And she accepted him. That was brave of her."

"Brave of her, woman?" said the rector; "it was wicked infatuation."

"My dear," said the actress to Laura, "I honor you. Such faith is rare as it is delightful."

"Let us close this humiliating scene," said the rector. "Whatever the partner of your indiscretion may think, Mr. Eastcott, I am of the opinion that your action has been unworthy of a clergyman and a gentleman, and must now request you to hand me your resignation."

"Then, Wilfred," said the actress, "you see how careful a man should be when he is surrounded by persons who bear him ill will. It is dangerous under such circumstances to kiss your own mother. Gentlemen," she continued, addressing us, "permit me to tell you a little story. A young lady of good family was foolish enough to marry a poor clergyman because she loved him. As a consequence she earned the reproach of her friends. She had one son, and he became fatherless at an early age. The widow being left penniless took to the stage as a means of livelihood, and managed by hard work to carry out her late husband's wishes and send her son to college to prepare him for the church. Fearing that the mother's profession might retard the son's progress she separated herself from him as much as possible, and it was one of their rare and delightful meetings that you have so uncharitably misinterpreted. The lady's stage name was Maud Valaire, but to Wilfred Eastcott his mother was always Maud Eastcott. The pseudonym does not now exist, for the lady's theatrical life came to an end last night."

There was silence for a few minutes; the actress' revelation had completely dumfounded us all. For myself I felt a burst of exultation that Eastcott had triumphed, for I liked the man and had, before the scandal, looked forward with pleasure to the prospect of having him for a brother-in-law.

Laura was equally elated at the curate's triumph, and approaching the handsome Mrs. Eastcott kissed her affectionately.

"My dear Miss Perivale," said the ex-actress, "how proud I am of Wilfred's future wife."

"Mr. Fox," said Eastcott meekly, "I am afraid my conduct has been such as to give rise to suspicion, but no real harm has been done, so apologies are scarcely necessary on either side."

I think we all had the good taste to feel ashamed of ourselves, and the rector and my father had the grace to apologise.

"Mr. Perivale," said Eastcott, "I must acknowledge my presumption in asking your daughter to become my wife, but I trust you will permit me to humbly appeal for your consent to the engagement."

Whatever my father might have done in other circumstances, at that particularly moment he felt bound to be generous, and so gave his consent.

Of course, as a general thing reason is more reasonable than faith, but for once the latter came out trumps.

To Vary the Monotony of Your Daily Fare.



With Stale Bread—An excellent lunch dish and not often met with. Put half a pound of crumbs in a dish and pour over just enough stock to moisten them. Mince half a pound of any kind of cold meat finely, press all the stock you can get out of the crumbs, and add them to the meat, together with half an onion, chopped, a dessertspoonful of curry powder, an ounce of butter, and a little salt. Mix all well together. It should be moist, but not sloppy; so if too dry, add a little stock or gravy. Well butter a pliedish, put in the mixture. Bake in a moderate oven for half an hour. If the bread happens to be in pieces from two to three inches deep, a particularly pretty and appetizing dish could be made.

BROWN BREAD PUDDING—Is particularly good and may be made attractive looking. Rub enough stale brown bread through a sieve to make half a pound of crumbs. Cream together six ounces of butter and eight ounces of sugar; then add to them three eggs, beating them well in. Next add the crumbs, a quarter of a pound of chopped peel, two ounces of glacé cherries cut in halves, the grated rind of a lemon, and two

tablespoonfuls of milk. Well butter some small cups or molds; fill three three-quarters full of the mixture. Place the molds in a saucepan with boiling water to come half way up them; put a piece of greased paper across the tops and steam them for one hour. Turn them out carefully, press half a cherry and two thin strips of angelica on the top of each. Pour round German sauce.

FISH PUDDING—After removing all skin and bones from the fish, either pound the fish in a mortar or chop it fine. Next chop three ounces of suet and mix with it three ounces of bread crumbs. Put these in a basin with the fish, two teaspoonfuls of chopped onion, salt and pepper. Beat up two eggs, add half a pint of milk to them, then add them to the other ingredients, mixing all well together. Well butter a pudding basin, well together, pressing it down well. Twist a piece of greased paper round the top of the basin, and steam the pudding for one hour. Turn it on to a hot dish, and pour egg sauce all over it.

DRISDEN PATTIES—Cut three slices of stale bread about two inches thick, then stamp out rounds with a plain cutter about three inches in diameter. Hollow out the center of each, leaving a case of bread. Cut

a neat little round top to fit each case. Dip the cases for a few seconds in milk; then drain them. Chop fine half a pound of cold meat, one small onion, and enough to fill two teaspoonfuls of parsley. Mix these all together, add a little gravy or sauce, and salt and pepper to taste. Next brush the cases of bread over with egg and cover with the mixture with bread crumbs; then fry them a golden brown in boiling fat. Make the meat mixture hot; fill in the cases, piling the mixture high. Put on the lids after frying them, and serve them hot, garnished with fried parsley.

With Fish—

SALMON WITH GREEN DUTCH SAUCE—Take a piece of salmon two inches thick if for a small family, put it on a plate, tie it in a napkin, and put both in a saucepan of boiling water which is salted, four teaspoonfuls salt to one quart water, and which contains one tablespoon vinegar. Boil twenty minutes; serve on a napkin; garnish with parsley and lemon, or slices of cucumber, with green Dutch sauce in a sauce boat.

FISHERMAN'S SOUP—Put one-quarter pound butter in a stew pan; when melted add six ounces flour, stir well together over a

slow fire a few minutes, then cool, add one quart milk and two quarts stock; stir over the fire till boiling; cut the flesh from two flounders or other firm fish, throw in the bones and trimmings to the soup, with four cloves, two bay leaves, one spoonful essence of anchovies, one of Worcestershire sauce, half a spoonful essence, one teaspoon sugar, one of salt, or three, if stock was unsalted; let the whole boil quickly ten minutes, skimming well; cut the fish into neat pieces; lay it in a stew pan with one tablespoon finely chopped parsley; strain the soup through a fine strainer on to the fish; let it cook ten minutes; add one gill of cream if convenient, and serve.

GREEN DUTCH SAUCE—This is simply Hollandaise sauce colored green by pounding the leaves of fresh parsley and squeezing the juice through muslin. Stir into the sauce the last thing.

SALMON CROQUETTES—Take the remains of dressed salmon free from the skin and bone, which should be bruised and boiled for stock in one pint of water until reduced to half pint. Tear the flesh into shreds; make a béchamel sauce of the fish stock, using one tablespoon butter and the same of flour. When thick and smooth add one gill cream, glass sherry, and the beaten yolks of

two eggs, which must be stirred in last and allowed to come to the boiling point, but not to boil. Then put in half pound salmon flakes. It should be as thick as oatmeal porridge. When turned in a buttered plate it should spread but not run. Spread an inch thick on a plate, set on ice till cold, divide into pieces, shape into form of cork, egg, crumb, and fry two minutes in hot fat. Serve with cucumber salad.

A Sunday Dinner.

Cream of onions.
Sirloin steak à la Soyier.
Mashed potatoes à la Espagnole. Asparagus.
Lettuce. French dressing.
Strawberry cream.

CREAM OF ONION SOUP—Use about three-quarters of a pound of Spanish onions or three or four common onions. Slice and sauté in three or four tablespoons best butter without browning, add three sprigs parsley and one pint water, and let simmer until tender. A little more water may be needed. The mass through a sieve. Cook one-third cup flour in one-third cup best butter. Gradually add the onion pulp and one quart milk and season with one table-

spoon salt and paprika. A little cream or yolks of eggs and cream is a great improvement to all cream soups. If a soup of less consistency be preferred, use cold water. Boil in salted water, drain, and pass through a potato ricer or vegetable press. Add one tablespoon each of fine chopped onion and parsley, cooked in one tablespoon butter without browning; salt and pepper, add enough hot broth to make of the consistency desired. Beat thoroughly. Serve piping hot.

MASHED POTATOES A LA ESPAGNOLE—Pare six or eight potatoes and let stand several hours in cold water. Boil in salted water, drain, and pass through a potato ricer or vegetable press. Add one tablespoon each of fine chopped onion and parsley, cooked in one tablespoon butter without browning; salt and pepper, add enough hot broth to make of the consistency desired. Beat thoroughly. Serve piping hot.

